Brickmaking on Hayling Island

Noel A. Pycroft.

Noel loading upwards of 70,000 bricks into the drying hacks.

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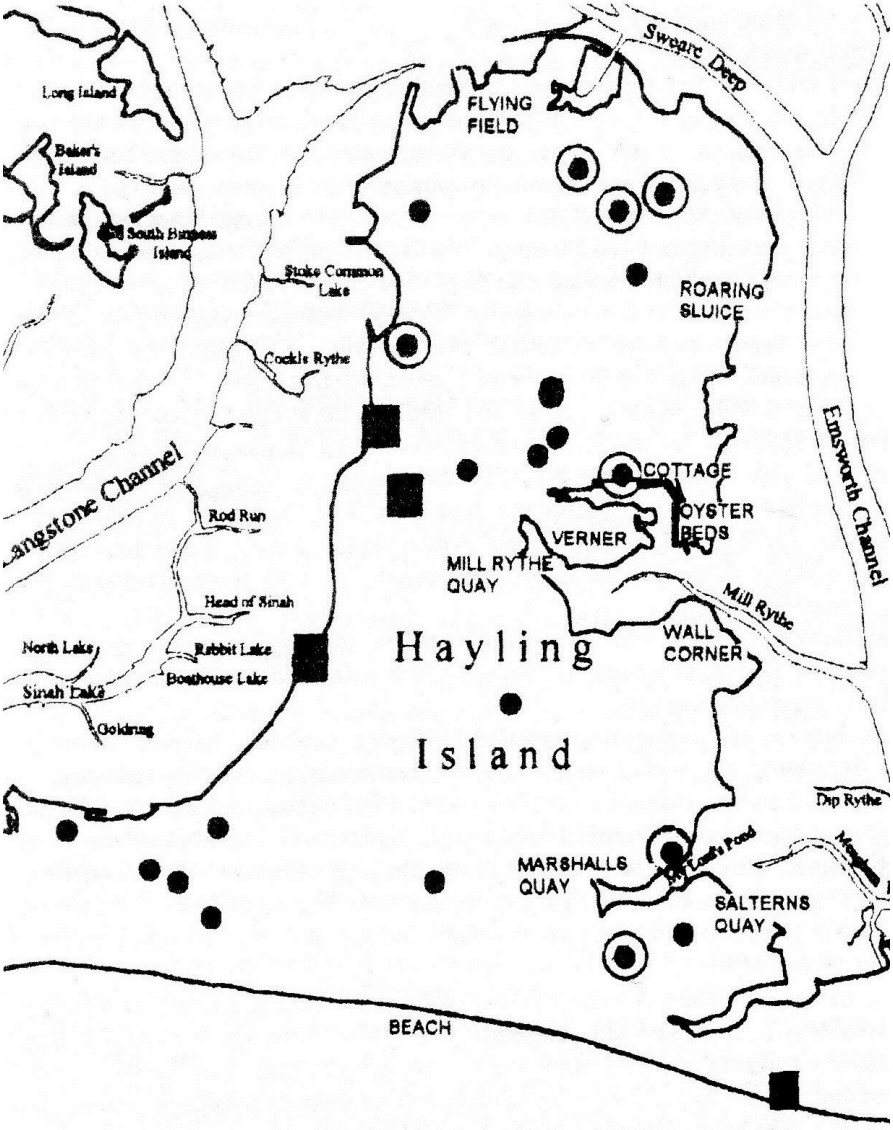


Ancient Brickworks of Hayling Island.

The square marks are of Lime Kilns, the ringed ones of Brick Kilns and the rest Clamp Yards.

Brickmaking on Hayling Island

Noel A. Pycroft

Many millions of bricks have been made on Hayling since the seventeenth century, see map No. 1 for the sites. Square marks are of lime kilns, the ringed ones are of brick kilns, the rest clamp yards. There must have been others earlier. In Middle Stoke Farmhouse the bricks in the chimney are in all probability late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Some of these are Dutch, they are easily distinguished as they are small. There were very few bricks made from the end of the Roman occupation until the thirteenth century when Flemish brickmakers were brought to Hull to make bricks for William de la Pole who started to build Holy Trinity Church in 1286. Some of the bricks I noticed there are 26 cm long not 22 cm. The early sites were of kilns where wood was used as fuel. A site close to a copse was ideal and also close to the water for barge transport. Later from about l800 coal was used, certainly in Tournerbury, Fishery Lane, Clovelly Road and Pycroft Close. Bricks were transported by water from Tournerbury to Worthing also Thorney Island. These were clamp burnt and can be seen in a house near St Nicholas Church on Thorney they being of distinctive colouring and texture.

From early times, as the land was owned by the estates of Earl Arundel, Lord Lumley, Fitzallan and Duke of Norfolk, men and women would be sent to establish a brickyard, perhaps to make only enough to build a house, barn, wall etc. In the same way as is done today in South Africa. These people built a bothy or shed to live in while working. When finished and the bricks burnt, these workings were abandoned or left to be used again in the future, the workers perhaps employed next year twenty miles away. The last estate yard was closed in 1968, this belonged to Ashburnham near Battle in Sussex. It had been run commercially for most of its life of one hundred and thirty years.

How bricks were made on Hayling Island

First suitable clay was found known as brick earth. This is aluvium the deposits in what were shallow lakes having been washed there by rivers or inundations of the sea. There were two since AD. One in the third century lasting about fifty years and the other in the eleventh century which lasted one hundred years. These can be seen when the clay is dug leaving a bank, there are two marks of decomposed vegetation that show dark as well as chalk and small stones which settled on each layer. This is not the case at Tournerbury where the clay is a much earlier deposit, it is about one and a half metres deep on sand with an 'overburden' of brown green pebbles and stones under the top soil. Probably an ice age feature. This clay like brick earth did not need a great deal of firing. Thirty-six faggots or one cord of wood per thousand bricks in an open top kiln. About five hundredweight of good coal would suffice where in other clays eight hundredweight was needed.

When private ownership of the brickyards came into being a lease or agreement was made with the owner of the land. At Pitsham, near Midhurst, W. T. Lamb today lease the land from Cowdrey Estate all the equipment belonging to the brickmaker. A royalty on the amount of bricks or clay paid yearly. See Little's agreement and Longcroft's papers in addendum.

This was usual throughout the country as land was rarely purchased. Very few brickyards on Hayling are recorded or the names of the people that worked them. Robert Barber is mentioned in the eighteenth century also as a saltmaker, possibly doing both jobs as the heat from the kiln would evaporate the brine. The names of Derben and Cullimore are both listed in the 1881 census. Blake, Cole, Parks, Noble, Stokes, Twine, Derben, Foster and Windebank, were known to my family.

All that remains of the twenty sites shown on the map are two kiln bases, one at Woodgaston and the other at Stoke. The site at Stoke is adjacent to a salt pan and duck decoy pond where wild fowl could be caught in the winter; it is

possible salt was made there. Urns could be placed on top of the kiln.

How clamp bricks are made.

Measurements were in yards, feet and inches, which I have converted. Starting in using a grapht and shovel a strip roughly 90 cm wide 18 m long was 'encallowed', that is the topsoil removed. The clay then dug to the hard or soft strata below, this was usually 90 cm, easy to measure as 1.6 cubic metres, or 2 cubic yards, made 1,000 bricks, sometimes 1,100 bricks according to the density of clay, very hard to judge so not taken into account. Stones and rubbish picked out. One man would dig enough clay in a day to make 8,000 bricks. This is known as 'flat digging'. Then clay dug from around the heap was wheeled in barrows on top of this making a heap about 1.5 m high.

The drying ground was then prepared each ‘hack’ being made of earth four metres apart. The table or stool was purchased or made in some places, a sun shelter was erected over this made of straw or hurdles. The fuel was usually rotted household refuse containing ashes from fires and ranges. This was known as 'scavenge' or 'town stuff’. Boiler ash and also smoke box ash from steam railway engines. This burnt fiercely. Some ashes brought to Hayling from Portsmouth by barge. My father-in-law, Robert Legg remembered his uncles, the Coombe's of Bosham, in their *Emma* unloading at Tournerbury in 1890. This ash sieved through a 1 cm holed sieve and the fine ash soil that fell out wheeled on to the heap of clay allowing 8 cm to each 30 cm of clay. All of the coarse breeze wheeled close to where the clamp would be burnt. Sand had been brought in by tip carts from the dunes at the ferry or from the quays around Hayling this having been loaded from the harbour, Horseshoe Run being favourite, black when dug turning to silver when dry. A 'plain' prepared to dry sand which was spread out each day and continually raked, swept into heaps, then put in a sand 'lodge' or small shed. We afterwards used barrels or tanks for this. A 'doome' built to dry it in dull weather by a fire in the centre. From 1960 we used inland sand as it dried easier and kept dry in dull weather whereas sea sand became damp again.

Brick making started mid to end of March. A well had been dug and water put in tubs made from hogsheads cut in half each containing 120 litres. Enough clay for the day was 'under-mined' from the heap by the 'hommicker' with a shovel the ash falling on it, this picked over with a clay hoe or 'tommyhawk', water continually added by bucket. This soaked overnight, called a 'soakdown'. In the morning the clay was thrown into a heap about 1 m high. A man or boy without boots climbed to the top of the heap and started to tread it, he was known as a 'tread boy', mixed to a dough-like pug, then thrown by turning iron into a heap near the table, the ground had been sanded. This is called 'hollow sheering', the heap of mixed pug covered with grass, later sacks or tarpaulins, to keep moist. In the nineteenth century, horse or barrel mills were introduced. There was one at Tournerbury to mix the clay, then horizontal ones driven by combustion engines, later electric in our yards. Clay from the heap or later that extruded from a mill cut by the 'pug boy' or 'pugger up' with a 'longcuckle' placed on the table, which had been sanded. A 'wait' was cut by 'hand cuckle', rolled in sand, this slightly larger than the mould. The mould had been wetted and sanded and placed on a 'stock', this had a 'mouse' which formed the 'frog' in the bricks. The moulder picked up the 'wait' and threw it into the mould, cleaned the surplus off with a striker, kept wet by a drip tub or bowl of water. In Tournerbury the Allen family in the 1920s used a bow to clear the surplus. The mould containing the soft brick was picked up, shaken and the content placed on a 'pallet' board, this is known as 'slip' moulding. The brick was 'turned out'. By this method, a 'gang' or 'full handed' stool comprising six men, women and boys could make 5,000 bricks in a thirteen to fourteen hour day and a single man 1,200. Great grandfather's record working with four others, forty two thousand bricks in one week with his wife taking turns moulding. The table known as a 'berth' or 'stool'.

The pallets carrying wet bricks were placed on a board or stool known as a 'page'. The 'page boy' put them on a 'bearing off' barrow, this has springs to stop the soft brick 'sqabbing' or going out of shape. These barrows usually carried thirty-two bricks. Sand thrown onto them, wheeled to the 'hacks', taken off or 'offbeared', using a setting board 'set' edgeways on dry straw, fern or grass to assist drying, then covered with straw to protect from rain

and heat. 'Hurdles' were used to stop rain on one side, moved according to direction of the wind. Later wooden ‘caps’ and ‘loos’ were used. On reaching seven high they were fit to handle. The top six rows were 'skintled', eleven handfuls or thirty-three bricks taken out, then starting the second brick by setting it South West to North East leaving a gap of 4 cm, the bottom ones, 'grounds', being left. Openings like this enabled the bricks to catch the sun and prevailing South West wind. The hacks laid South South West to North North East seven high open finished ten high. In twelve days they should be ready to 'crowd', after the 10th September, drying time increased perhaps to one month. The clamp ground prepared and kept dry surrounded by 'breastwork', 'skintles' laid, the 'breeze' poured in from a 'shandy' barrow, without a wheel, carried from the heap. This breeze kept dry. A ‘ringing’ placed on top of the ‘skintles’ ensured a tilt to the centre.

All 'green' bricks carefully stacked solid on the breeze, any apertures filled with soil. Any number could form a clamp, 500 or 5 million, usually 50 thousand on Hayling. Our largest contained 140 thousand in 1947. Six of us wheeled in between 10 and 14 thousand in a twelve-hour day.

Burnt bricks were used to cover the sides 'casing' on the top, 'batten' was laid two thick with one 'flat batten'. The stacking 'face' covered by ‘tilting boards’ until the finishing 'head' was completed. Sometimes the clamp was lit before finishing the stacking. The whole burnt attaining a heat of 1,100 degrees centigrade, a little more if there was any moisture, this caused the bricks to distort hence called 'navvies', 'boots', 'bananas' etc. The ones laid on the breeze 'burrs' rain on top of the clamp caused 'shuffs' which fell to pieces, used for garden paths with surplus brick dust, recommended in old books, no weeds! The 'burnovers' (underburnt) used as ‘skintles’ on next clamp the 'mild' ones for internal walls in buildings or where they would be covered. When handling bricks we wore ‘cotts' made from inner tubes of lorry tyres, formerly these were made from leather. We had small ones for our thumbs. The brick tax 1784-1850 caused bricks to be made just over one centimetre thicker so used more clay. In this area there were exceptions that make it difficult to year date when a house was built.

The family connection

The first brickmakers of our family were the Dopson's of Portsmouth. My great grandmother was Emma Dopson, she herself was a brickmoulder who told my grandfather that the family had made bricks prior to 1750. She was born July 31, 1834. Great grandfather William Henry Pycroft, started working in a brickyard in 1841 aged nine. This yard make kiln bricks in St Mary's Road, eventually he became foreman for a Mr Moody.

In the 1870s he and his wife started their own yard in Velder Avenue, all the clay brought in from sewer trenches, graves, footings of houses. Here they made clamp bricks. Emma worked in the yard in the summer as well as having six boys and husband to look after, she died aged forty-seven having lost two sons. Once Emma, a lad, and her sister Ann, made 600 bricks while her sons and husband ate a sparrow pie, they took too long sucking the bones, she insisted that the mould be kept going throughout dinner break of one hour.

Emma once ‘skintled’ 28 thousand bricks after dinner and then went home to iron linen. My grandfather William, started doing light jobs in the yard at five-years-old, and by ten he was making bricks after morning school, which he did not attend regularly. Grandfather could not read or write until he was over seventy; while recuperating from pleurisy grandmother taught him, quite an achievement! His thumbs were stunted due to pressing the cold clay into the corners of the moulds. This was known as 'thumbing'. As the wait was drawn towards the body it sometimes left unfilled corners and ends. The ends were pressed by the palm known as 'palming'.

After working in Portsmouth great-grandfather died. Great-uncle George, his wife, grandad and his family emigrated to North Hayling. George shortly afterwards started brickmaking, grandad market gardening, this failed, he then worked for his brother George next door in Copse Lane. For a short time he worked for William Windebank, who had sacked his brickmakers as they had let the kiln get low while catching goldfinches on Northney Marsh.

Incidentally in 1901 Windebank's brickyards rateable value was reduced from £9 12s 0d to £4 0s 0d on the parish valuation list loaned to me.

In 1911 grandfather started his own yard in Copse Lane, with uncle Bill, later uncle Bert, father helping weekends, night times and summer holidays etc. In 1914 he closed the yard owing to the Great War. The unsold bricks remaining until 1917 when they were used to build Southbourne Aerodrome for the Americans. He re-opened in 1919 and closed 1950.

My first recollection of brickmaking was visiting my grandfather's yard in 1932 when three years old. Father had started to work there in 1919 aged seventeen. When my father opened his yard in 1934 he brought from a disused brickyard near Doyle Court, Portsmouth, all their remaining gear. This consisted of 'caps', 'loos', metal running plates, barrows and planks, all in need of repair.

He bought new from Lillies 4,000 feet of nine by one inch boards which he creosoted one side. These, held up by bricks and pieces of wood, formed the 'hack' bottoms. Better than earth banks for drying. He had made in the winter nights barrows out of oak and elm from J. D. Foster, Emsworth. Bolts from Streets and wheels and fittings from Larkhams, scrap merchants, Havant.

In later years we children rode our bicycles to Emsworth to collect this wood. The 'crooks' for stays and legs were kept in the fish well of the laid up *Ostrea,* a former scallop dredger sunk in the creek. Bonnie Middleton and Percy Lewis picked them out.

During 1934 and afterwards we lived in two sheds in the summer at the brickyard, one being the former office of the flying field at the bridge. Father and mother were just starting business so we lived on the site. They were governed by the weather so this was necessary. As children we helped in the brickyard covering and incovering the sides of the bricks. We raked the breeze down to dry, raked the sand and threw water on the clay, cut the grass etc.

Father gave his boat *Ben Hur* to his brother Leonard and his Seine net to George and Bill Goldring as they helped dig out the ashes from a tip in the former brickyard in Fishery Lane. Eric Bettesworth loaded onto his lorry, and delivered 14 cubic metres in one day. He also built a pug mill of wood and used the gearing and shafts from a scrapped mangle out of a laundry. The blades were cut from a drop keel of a boat and turned into shape in Alf Smith's forge in the evenings. This was driven by a Ruston Hornsby engine. Father was a genius making things from scrap although no technical education or very few tools. This time he did not get it right until Ted Hedger suggested a different ratio. Father started making bricks by hand with two men and two boys. On May 14th he sold bricks. Endless trouble with the engine so an electric one was hired to replace it. In the spring we mended 'caps' and 'loos' as we laid out the 'hacks'.

Many men and boys worked for father at different times, 7 a.m. till 9, 9.15 till 12, 1 till 4.30 and 5 till 7 during fine days, no work if it rained. The day for mother and father began at 6 a.m. and finished 10 p.m. Sometimes 4 a.m. start to 'skintle' a 'hack' before the men arrived. Mother could wheel a crowding barrow holding 100 dry bricks when the usual load was 72, father's carried 140. Each brick weighed 3 kg when dry, the barrows had cast iron wheels.

A great help was living on the job. During the summer 1935 two 'jubilee', or 'skips' with rails, were bought as scrap from Kennel and Hartley's Brewery, Emsworth These were used to carry the clay nearer the machine when being dug as the machine was in one place, a shed was built over the electric motor which drove it.

In 1937 A Monarch brickmaking machine was bought on hire purchase and repaid on a monthly basis of £24 3s 4d A shed was built over this. Three boys working on this machine could make 600 bricks per hour or 10 bricks per minute, a child of 11 could do two of the jobs. It took a gang of five to do all the jobs with 'Hommicker' and 'off bearer'. Later when my wife became 40 I cut the machine down to 480 bricks per hour wrongly thinking she was old! The machine could also be used to pug clay. The grass between the 'hacks'

was cut with hooks and father scythed, mostly on Sundays. This was to allow the wind to blow across the ground, the hooks and scythe were sharpened frequently owing to sand on the grass.

When the war came all stocks of bricks were sold for air-raid shelters both private and public. Father made bricks in 1943, covering the clamps with corrugated iron because of blackout restrictions, with the help of one man.

After helping my father at times in 1944 in the brickyard my brother and I started work in the then small field making in the first year 150 thousand bricks with, of course, help from other boys. We first dug clay, digging out slow worms, watching stoats and weasels running about, black redstarts feeding on the spiders living in the wooden gear stacked in the field. All birds were abundant, the Swedish blackbirds were smaller than our own natives. After Christmas the missel thrushes begin to mate, flying in that straight line, swooping just the same as a woodpecker. The rooks flying straight from east to west from 3 o'clock until dark.

It is the rook not the crow that flies straight in winter-time. The mating greenfinches flying so strange like bats. While digging in 1946 we came across Romano British pottery and each year we dug more pottery and burnt flints. These hearths were for cooking and salt boiling. Remains of fires were about two foot six inches under the alluvium deposits of the third and tenth century inundations. In 1964, we dug out a Roman British salt works, complete with a six strut tray, much charcoal, and fourteen tons of burnt flint, pot boilers and much pottery all recorded by Richard Bradley of Oxford University.

In 1947 there was an invasion of fleas. I was running a sprung 'bearing-off' barrow carrying 32 bricks two miles a day, mostly barefoot. Father and Pete Jordan wheeled the clay up a slope of planks to the hopper in wheelbarrows which they loaded by hand, about 17 tons per day, after hoeing the ashes in. That year we made a record 384 thousand bricks.

In 1946, wanting to make a second set of crushing rollers, father and I rode

our bicycles to William Wheatley's at Wickham which was an agricultural engineers and foundry. Father bought two horse drawn rollers. In William Wheatley's yard there were 11 traction engines, which they had hired out with threshing tackles, for sale at £15 each. Today I think £40,000 each would be an approximate cost. What a changing world we live in! From 1945 we bought from disused brickyards their remaining gear. 'Bearing off' barrows from a shed in Denvilles that had been G. H. Deans yard that closed in 1930. From Jones at Southbourne, barrows, running plates, a Lintott pug mill, 'hack' boards, 'caps' and 'loos'; these were paid for with bricks as Jones was a builder. A Monarch machine from Dryers, Hulbert Road. 'Caps' from Todd's yard Waterlooville, all creosoted and in good condition.

From 1946, while Valerie and I were courting, she came nearly every night, and 'looed' up the bricks thus saving us an hour. In 1948 the trolley was adapted to carry the clay to the Monarch. A ramp was built using old beach groynes sold by the Council. A winch from a barge was installed with pulley wheels. This was driven by the same Brooke 10 h.p. electric motor hired 1934 from the intermediate pulleys that reduced the speed by belt to the Monarch. The trolley pulled up the incline by wire rope. Several of these frayed until a non-rotating one was fixed, (see certificate). Other winches of cast iron were used until 1964 when a steel one from a minesweeper was fitted, very satisfactory, and we had an identical one for spares. In 1949 'loos' from Trowerns yard, Bridgemary, which had closed 1947. 1952, grandad's Monarch machine. In 1953 'caps' from Nightingales, these were in sheds stored from the beginning of the war at Petersfield and were in good condition.

When Valerie and I married wed lived in a caravan in the field and as she did not work Saturday mornings, being a clerical officer for the Admiralty, Valerie helped on the machine. A 4 a.m. start allowed the other men to go home at nine which gave me time to dry breeze and sand etc.

In 1956 our eldest son was born.

In 1958 we moved into our house we had built in the field. Our second son

was born that year. Valerie worked many hours in the yard taking turns on the machine. We have a film recording this. She continued to help until 1989 as well as keeping house. Life was easier after our sons started work and we had plenty of student labour.

In 1965 a reconditioned Monarch machine and also a traverse light rail track, pulley wheels, light rail lines and oddments of machinery were obtained from W. Lamb, Nyewood brickyard, which had just closed. From 1965 John Derben, a builder, brought into our yard wood from various projects. Tom Hawes supplied wooden crates. Larkham's of Havant also scrap wood. We made extra 'loos', these sometimes being 16 feet long, which were short leg, carried out to the low bricks making life easier. My wife and I, not having to leap out of bed to 'loo-up' carrying from one 'hack' to the other. 'Loos' can spelt 'lews'.

In 1969 more 'caps' and 'loos' from Ewhurst in Surrey.

In 1979/80 'caps' and 'loos' were bought from R. H. Clarke's, West End yard, some of these 'caps' had been made in 1919, but others made of marine plywood, which never shrank, were made 1960. This yard closed in the late 60s, we paid £25 for a large lorry load.

All these acquisitions made life easier as we did not have to buy a great deal of wood to repair ours, which had became rotten or nail sick, as they were all pre 1939. The big help was the increase of drying ground. Father started with eight 'hacks' in 1934, each one being 48 yards long, that is 48 'caps', holding roughly 1,000 bricks each run, therefore a 'hack' held nearly 7,000 bricks at seven high. This varied in spring and autumn, as then we used a five-eighths of an inch setting board, in summer we used a half-inch board. In 1946 we laid out more 'hacks'. In 1947 we moved into the larger field, our 'hacks' were then 62 yards, holding 1,240 bricks one course, 9,680 bricks when finished. The whole of the drying area would then hold roughly 150 thousand bricks at seven high. We did not always top out, sometimes only five high, according to weather. As time went on, we laid 'hacks' much shorter as close to the machine as possible. The average run with the bearing off barrow was

100 yards or 90 metres, which in a 10-hour day is about 10 1/2 miles.

To get the fuel to burn our bricks, which was five barrows of screened ash, per thousand, we bought in or went and loaded it by hand. When we were unable to get the lorry alongside the ash tip we ran it in barrows, borrowed from Graham Little. These were ballast barrows holding a quarter of a cubic metre each, ideal for ash being very large. I have dug out from the ballast hole, Havant Road, the bricks fired with this ash, burnt a lovely colour due to the ammonia of rotted contents from the toilet buckets, which had been emptied on it from the gun site guardhouse for five years. This produced a stronger smell when burning but lovely bricks. Also ash from Hygeia Laundry, Havant, Gable Head Laundry, Hayling Yacht Co., Aldermoor School, the Baths Eastney, M.O.D. Eastney and Fishery Lane Sewer Works.

We had great fun when digging refuse looking for treasures. 1946, at Brockhampton hundreds of glass bottles came out. Peter Jordan and I enquired from Mr Larkham, how much glass bottles? He replied 'one half-penny'. We brought out a large barrow and filled it, also Derek and I filled sacks and pushed them on bicycles the one kilometre off Brockhampton Lane. We were duly paid one half-penny each, all these had been washed in the stream. Wasted effort for sixpence a dozen! The ash was a brown ginger colour which we presumed was waste from the tan yard and parchment factory that had been tipped there.

We dug out household tips, such as Gothic Lodge, Bacon Lane. In the 50s ash was obtained from Bognor waste destructor where all paper was burnt, all metal was pressed in cubes and sent to Port Talbot, bottles were picked out. The fine stuff riddled and put in heaps. This when screened yielded cockle, whelk and winkle shells and, many three-penny pieces. But not a lot of cinders.

Before the war, gas and electricity were being used for cooking. Vertical boilers, which were more efficient installed for heating, so there was not so much ash available from dumps in the 50s. We went on bicycles and in cars to look for old refuse tips finding these by talking to people, and looking for

Elderberry trees, hemlock, stinging nettles and cow parsley, growing in amongst blackberry bushes. Buying, or being given this, kept up our supplies. Never thinking of buying prepared coke as some other brick makers did. We live and learn! We cleared coalbunkers of dust.

In 1975 a 1914-18 army tip found at Milford was good ash, as well as many pop alley bottles, ink bottles, stone jars and a Canadian five dollar gold coin, sold for twenty-one pounds.

Power station ash from Rotherham, railway engine ash from Plymouth. Lastly we dug out the ash from the Watercress line's railway engines at Ropley where I did not realise that they had used chalk on the fire bars to stop clinker. Semi burnt bricks blew lime holes. In Naval ships ballast or sand was used on the fire bars. As many boiler stokers were ex-navy, they applied this method so prolonging the life of the fire bars. These experienced men did not get the clinker but burnt the Welsh steam coal out leaving good ash. Very few of these men can be left now, their knowledge has gone with them.

Father built the bases of clamps high to stop water getting to them, this was successful. Although from early times kilns were built below the ground level they had sump holes around them, my great grandfather fell in one, contracted rheumatic fever, and became crippled in the 1880s.

The Romans knew that, being down in the ground there was more oxygen to assist firing. As in India water is injected into the kiln for this purpose owing to humidity, also being down in the earth, heat is retained. father used corrugated iron sheets as a temporary roof on clamps and around the sides to stop draught. A shed was used to store dry breeze taken from the heap Saturday afternoons and Sundays, otherwise covered by corrugated iron. Corrugated used under clamps as a damp course

After 1966 bricks were made on a two-year cycle. Clay brought in from drains footings, which had been excavated, added to some we dug by machine in the summers, kept us going. Also dumpers were used, which had been bought as scrap and renovated with the help of William Burrows, who

helped us so much with everything in our ancient activities, as he called brick making, and our way of life. His brother John also contributed his electrical and mechanical knowledge giving us advice and help throughout the years from 1950 as did so many others of our friends.

In 1987 processed ash was bought from W. I. Lamb's South Godstone Yard and again in 1989. This was nearly all ready-made dust. Saved us time screening through our mechanical screen made out of scrap in the 1950s the basis being a cement mixer.

An amusing incident in the fifties

Mr Hunt visited us, he had worked in brickyards all of his life until eighty years old. He lived at Nyewood. Watching mother 'skintling' for a few minutes he remarked: "Madam, I have not seen a lady doing that job for fifty years. You are moving 2,500 bricks per hour only half of them turned correctly." Mother, like Queen Victoria, was not amused. Mr Hunt, then eighty-four, was of course correct. Mother quickly pointed out, we have plenty of south-west winds on Hayling so that did not matter so much, not like inland where the sun was relied on to dry the inner ends which had been turned outwards. Mr Hunt had burnt kiln bricks with bundles of straw, blackberry bushes, baffins or faggots, cord wood, Yorkshire coal, gorse, Welsh coal. For six years he had ridden his bicycle 13 miles each way every day to Hammer Brick and Tile Works, Haslemere from Nyewood. He was a very knowledgeable man.
We made our last bricks in 1989 and the yard was cleared in 1992.

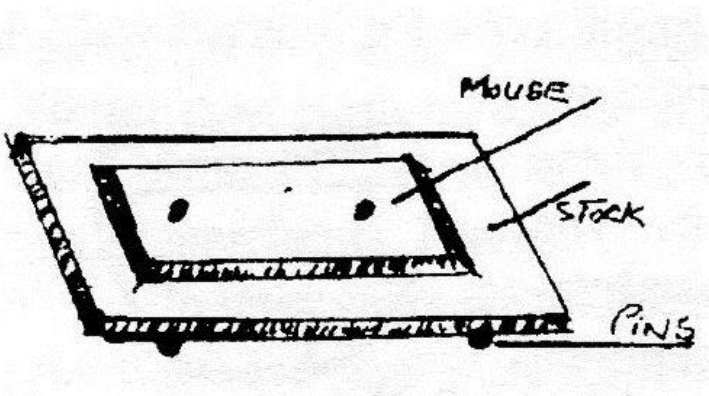
Expressions from brick making:

A cat on hot bricks
Hard as a brick
To drop a brick
As strong as a brick closet
Happy as a sand boy
Soft as pug
Sparta said: 'My army is as strong as a brick wall, and everyman a brick.'

What does it matter if you are old and bent when you can look back on a life well spent? I think my family's lives making bricks were well spent!

Monarch brick making machine.

Clay was mixed with ash and loaded into a small skip that ran on a 16-inch gauge railway track. This was pulled up a ramp by a winch that was controlled by a lever. The clay was then tipped in to the hopper of the machine. Blades on a central shaft then ground and passed the clay to the end of a barrel where a press on the shaft pushed the clay through a hole at the bottom and down a box-like shute with an adjustable throat or base. A sanded mould was put on to the table and a metal arm, which was worked from a cam on the shaft, pushed a mould under the throat. The clay was squeezed into the mould and the next mould pushed the full one out. Surplus clay was cleaned from the top of the mould using a small hoe and sand was thrown on to the top of the brick. The moulds were made of teak with a bottom and were steel shod. A pallet was placed on top of the mould that was turned upside down allowing the brick to fall gently on to the pallet. The brick was then placed on to the bearing-off barrow.



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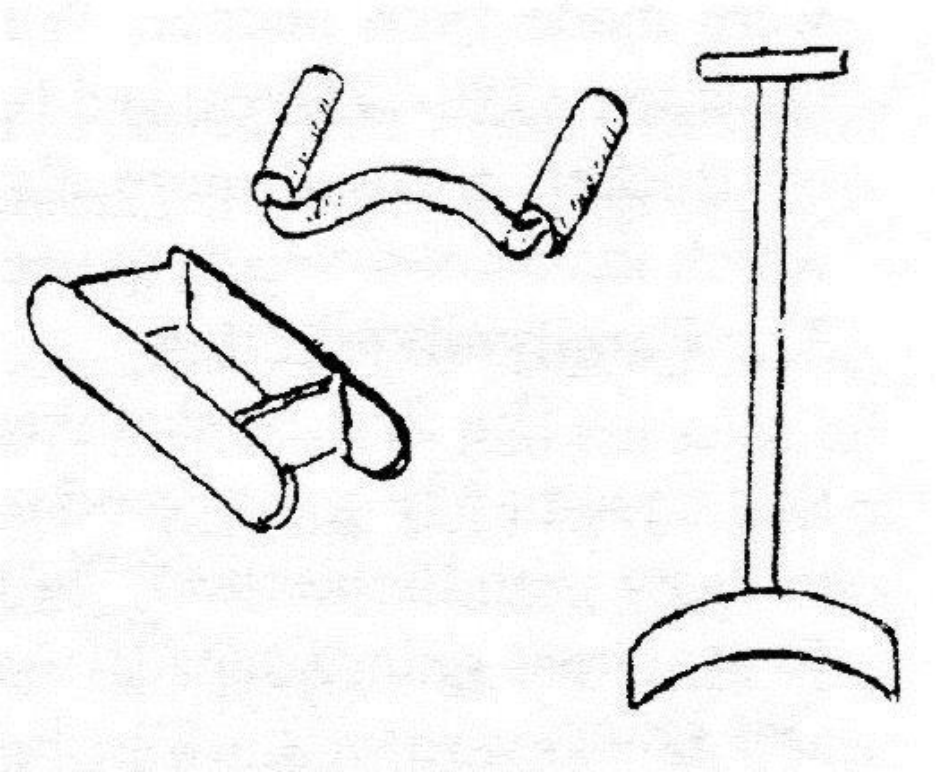
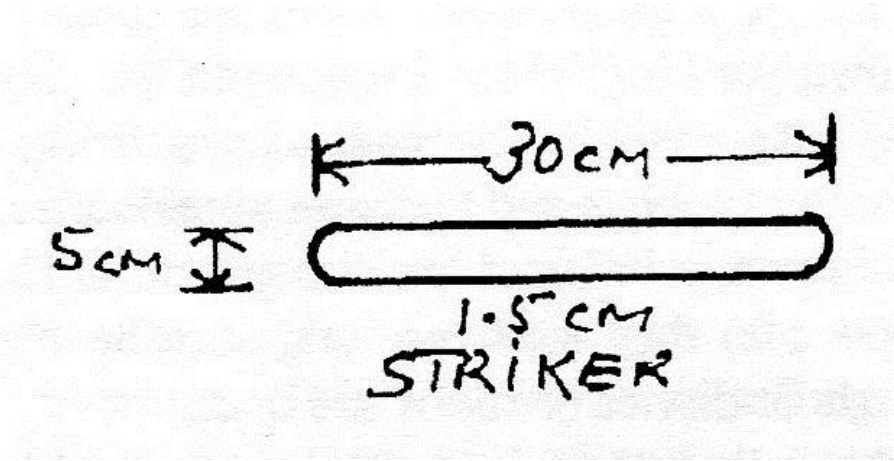
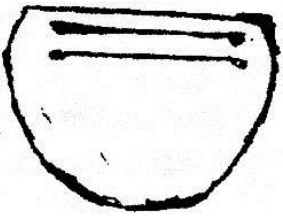


Brick Mould, Hand Cuckle and Clay Cuckle.

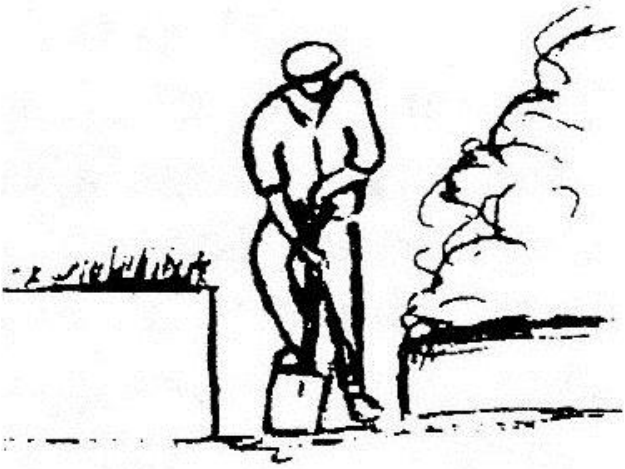


Striker.

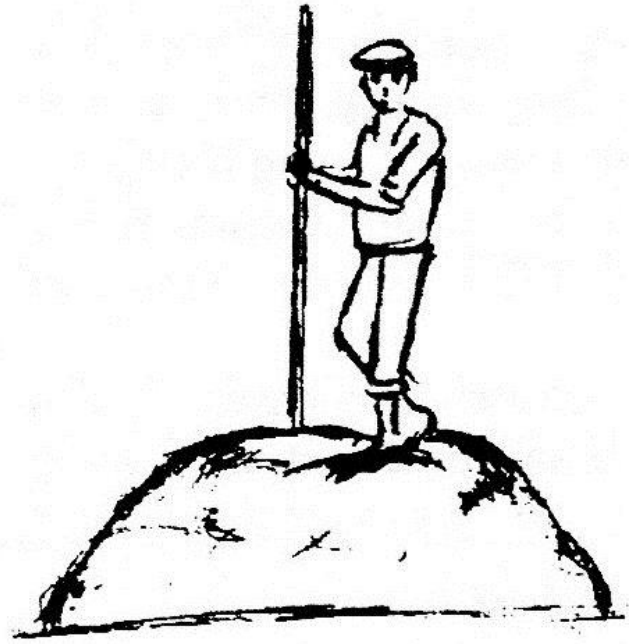


Rubber or Leather Cott or Glove.

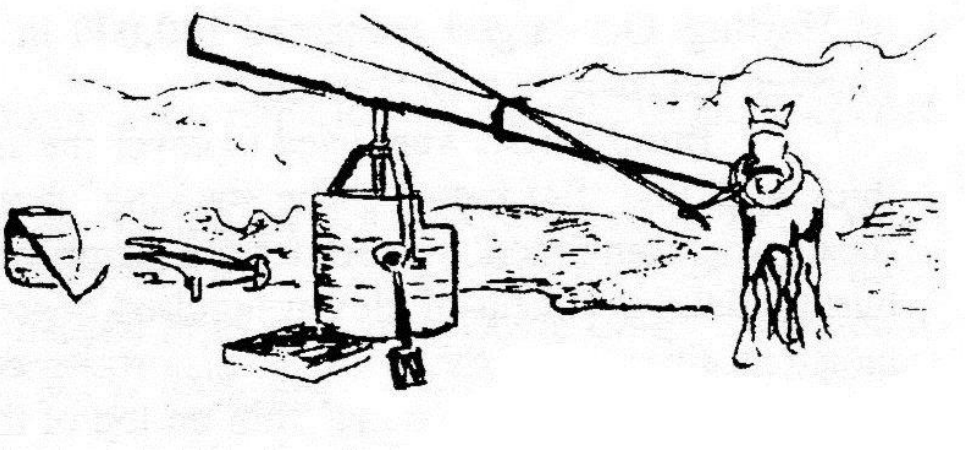
Turning Iron.



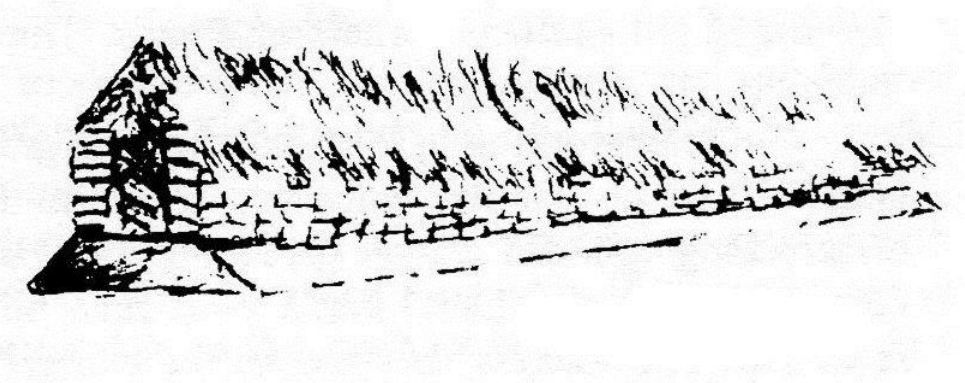
Clay Digging – First Pit.



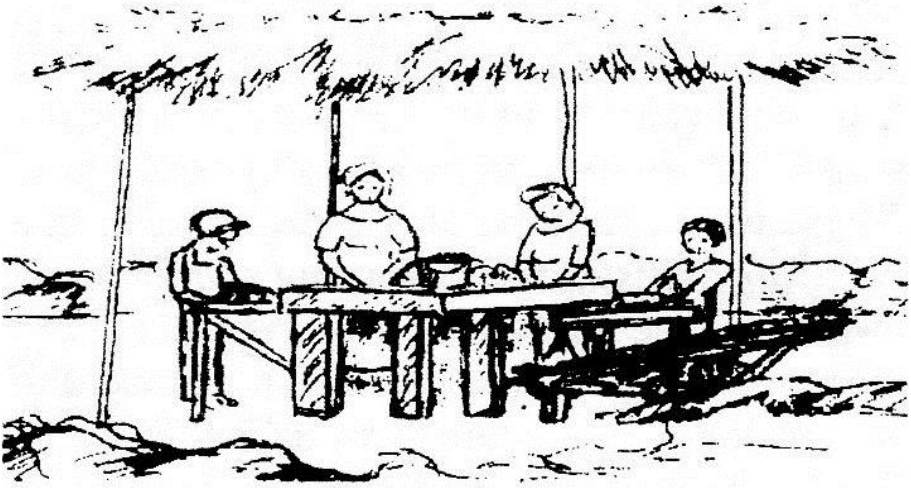
Treading the Clay.



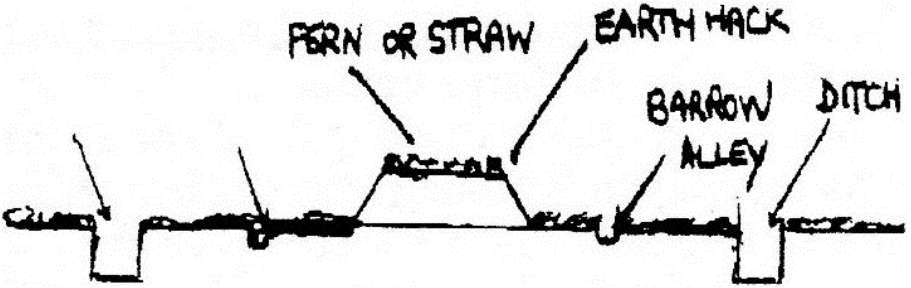
The Horse Mill.



Drying Hack.



Ladies Making Bricks – 1870s.



Drying Ground.

Walts ready made on table. Hurdle as loos. Framptons, Isle of Wight, *c.*1880.

Brickmaking in Velder Avenue, Portsmouth, 1887.Jim Pycroft, J. Perry, Peter Hart, W. Pycroft, Billy Pycroft, (nephew of W. Pycroft and George Pycroft.

In Copse Lane, 1924.

Bert Smith, Harold Pycroft and Geoff White, 1935.

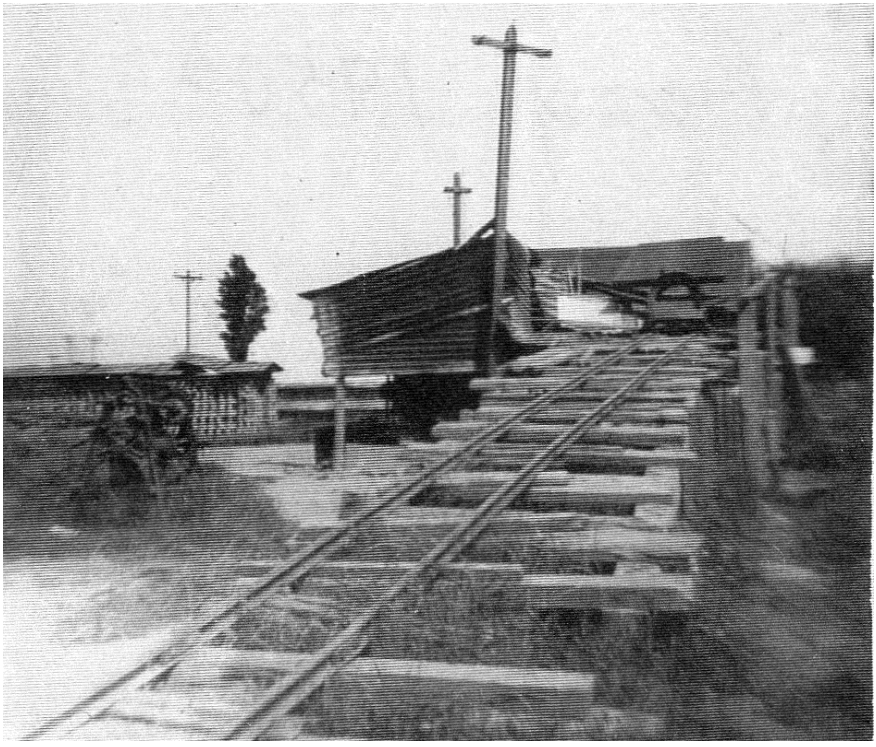
Valerie Pycroft, 41, Ian 13, Harold Pycroft, 69, Making 480 bricks an hour that is 2½ ton with the mould , 1970.

Starting a bottom.

Making a hack.

All barrow work, 1974. Teak barrow on the left made by grandfather's cousin, James Finnemore, in 1887.

Roofed and tinned.

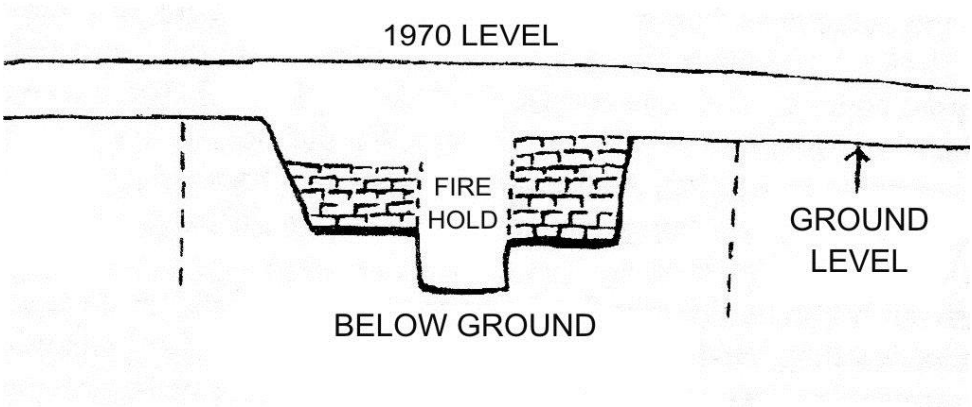


Ramp circa 1950s.

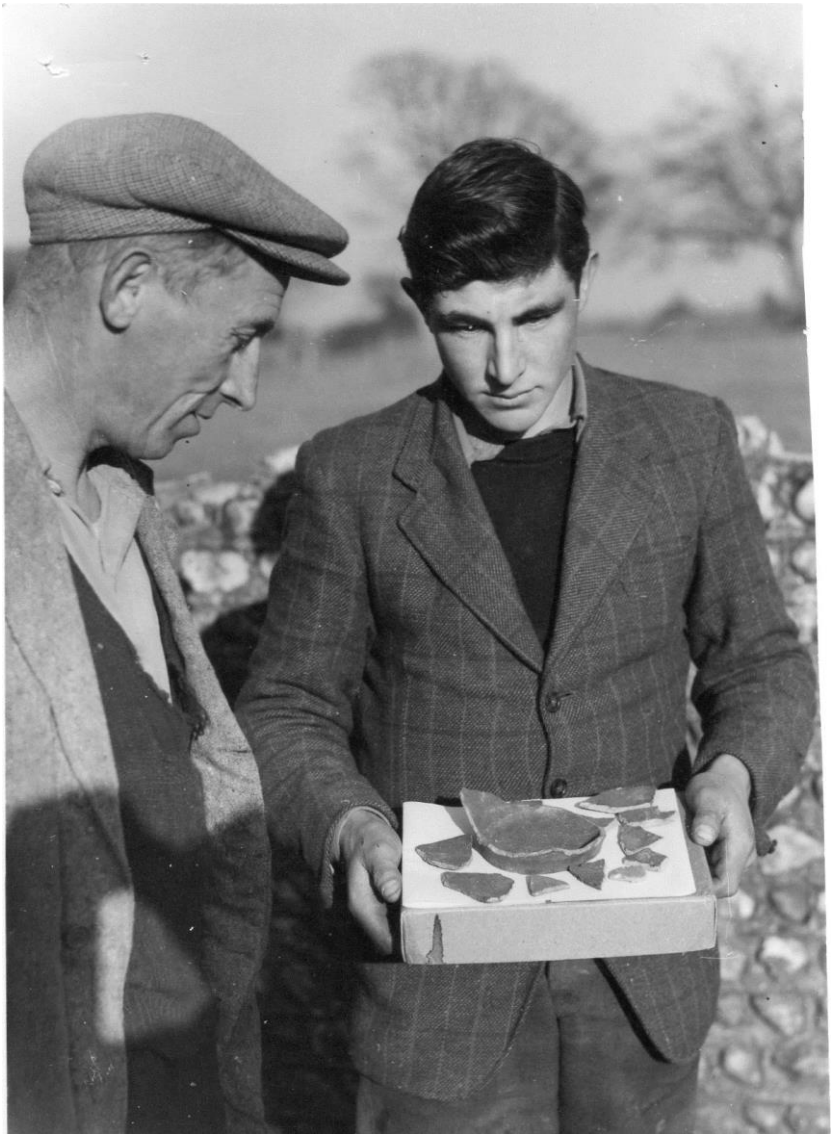
Clay heap with covered with railway ash from Ropley.

Drying sand from South Harting.

A doome drying sand as inland sand is now used doome not pugged with clay as dry sand does not run the same as sea sand which is finer and dryer.



Roman Kiln.



Harold Pycroft and Derek Pycroft with cheap Roman pottery dug from Little Crate field in North Hayling, 1946.

Havant History Booklet No. 16

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